



# Menstruation & 744 Women

## RWSSP-WN BRIEF 8-2018

### WHY ADULT WOMEN?

Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project in Western Nepal Phase II (RWSSP-WN II) is a bilateral water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) project. RWSSP-WN II is committed to create an environment in which all community members have equitable opportunities to pursue their right to water and sanitation, **whether menstruating or not!**

RWSSP-WN Phase II has conducted several surveys related to the sustainability of the great achievements made with sanitation and hygiene. Recent toilet use surveys indicated that there are times when people are not using their toilets even if these are available and generally are used. Menstruation was mentioned as one of the reasons, the two other main reasons being after child birth and during mourning. These findings triggered RWSSP-WN II to develop *Menstruation, WASH and RWSSP-WN - Position Paper, RWSSP-WN Brief 2-2018*.

This Brief focuses on adult women. A total of 755 women answered the survey. There is a lot of literature as far as the school environment and younger (teenage) women are concerned (also our Brief 6-2018), less so on adult women. Yet, adult women are the ones that RWSSP-WN II tends to work with: members of Water Users and Sanitation Committees, staff at the Municipality WASH Units, teachers, health workers and other active



professional women in the communities. Menstruation should not limit their participation in the community!

**Photo:** Women are important members in Water Users' and Sanitation Committees. Here women in Rolpa are discussing the water supply scheme layout and budget. Menstruation should not limit their participation.

### RWSSP-WN II Vision:

The right to access to water, sanitation and hygiene for all **means all**, including menstruating women & girls.

- ◆ Menstruation, WASH and RWSSP-WN - Position Paper Brief 2-2018
- ◆ Community health volunteers (N-55) Brief 5-2018
- ◆ Students (N-664), Brief 6-2018
- ◆ Teachers (N-48), Brief 7-2018
- ◆ **Adult women (N-755), Brief 8-2018**
- ◆ Toilet use (N-933) Brief 9-2018

This Brief was prepared by Sanna-Leena Rautanen with Pamela White. Kalpana Dishwa was in charge of the field research, coordinating the Kathmandu Training Institute On-The-Job Trainees who collected the data 22.2.-21.4.2018. Aura Liski and Sangita Khadka contributed to the question setting.

Project Support Unit, RWSSP-WN II / FCG International

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## WHO RESPONDED?

### Total 755 adult women

The age of the respondents:

- ◆ 18 to 29 (53%)
- ◆ 30 to 39 (25%)
- ◆ 40 to 49 (20%)
- ◆ Over 50 (2%)

From ethnic/caste group point of view:

- ◆ Adibasi/Janajati 22%
- ◆ Dalit 26%
- ◆ Disadvantaged Tarai groups 8%
- ◆ Religious minority (Muslim) 8%
- ◆ Others (mainly Brahmin and Chhetri) 37%

In four rural municipalities (Gaunpalikas):

- ◆ Bihadi, Parbat district (N-157)
- ◆ Gaidahawa, Rupandehi district (N-152)
- ◆ Kathekhola, Baglung district (N-95)
- ◆ Phedikhola, Syangja district (N-351)

All were declared 'ODF' & 49 local governance units (previous wards) declared 'Total Sanitation'.

The relation of the respondent to the head of household:

- ◆ Respondent is head of household (17%)
- ◆ Wife (20%)
- ◆ Daughter (21%)
- ◆ Daughter-in-law (29%)
- ◆ Mother (10%)
- ◆ Other relation (2%)

Only 17% of all respondents had participated in any awareness raising events regarding menstrual hygiene management organised by any agency.

## WOMEN NOT USING TOILETS DURING MENSTRUATION?

The data in this Brief originates from a menstruation specific survey exploring behavioural factors using the 'RANAS' approach ('Risks, Attitudes, Norms, Abilities and Self-regulation'; see References) rather than knowledge, targeted to adult women. This survey was inspired by an earlier toilet use survey. This, in turn, covered 932 respondents of which 58% were women and 42% men. While all respondents did have a toilet and lived in Open Defecation Free (ODF) localities, it was evident that the toilets were not always used.

The survey found that only 46% of the women and 43% of the men "*never went for the open defecation over the past seven days*". Meaning that over half the respondents in this large sample practiced open defecation at least sometimes. Out of all reasons, 16% stated that they themselves (or if the respondent was a man, women in their household), do not use the toilet during menstruation. Out of those who stated that they never went for open defecation over the past seven days, 50 respondents (or women in their family) would go for open defecation if menstruating. This brings the percentage of those who **would 'never go for open defecation' down from 45% to 34%**.

The results of the toilet use survey will be published in the next Brief-9 2018, launching at the start of the National Sanitation Week 2018.

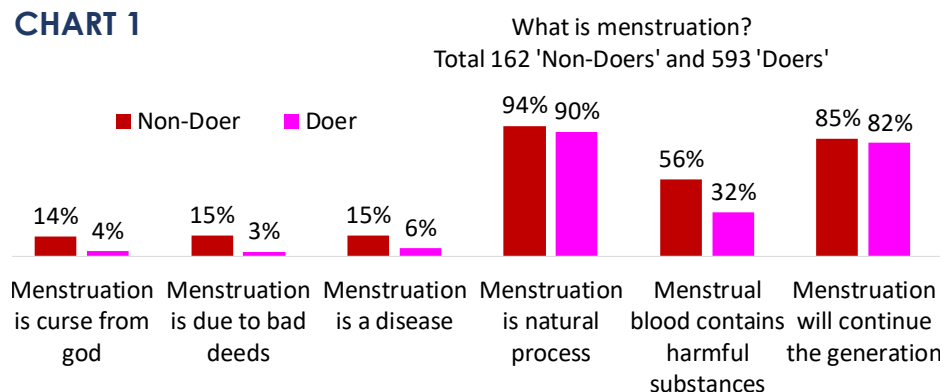
## USING OR NOT USING THE TOILET?

In RANAS the analysis focuses on the differences in between the 'doers' and the 'non-doers' - i.e. between women who do use the toilet during menstruation, and those who do not, so that the appropriate Behaviour Change Technique can address exactly the right factors. This Brief presents the highlights only, leaving the actual RANAS analysis for the main report.

In this survey the '**doers**' are those who always use the toilet when menstruating. Total 87% replied that they always use the toilet when menstruating, and this was consistent with the question where the expected reply was '*yes, I would use it as normal*'. However, among this group of 659 respondents, there were 160 who would use a jungle if not at home, and 119 who would be happy to defecate in the field. Hence, the '**doer**' is here defined as those who 1) always use the toilet when menstruating and 2) did not reply 'yes' to defecating in the field or in the jungle.

Out of all respondents, 79% were hence defined as the 'doers'. The locality-wise differences are clear: 100% of women in Phedikhola and Kathekhola were 'doers' while 52% in Bihadi and 43% in Gaidahawa were 'non-doers'.

### CHART 1



## RISKS

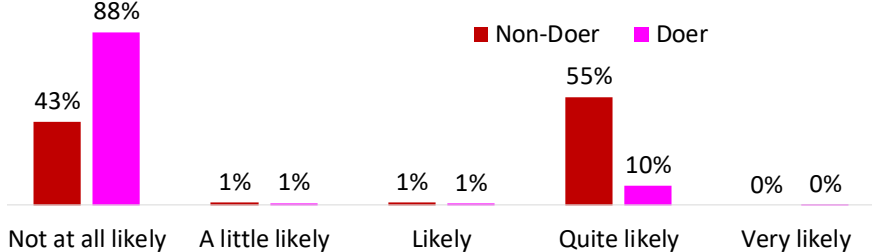
Risk factors are about health knowledge (see Chart 1), perceived vulnerability (am I at risk?) and perceived severity (how much would this affect my life?).

- The differences in Chart 1 are fairly similar but the 'Non-Doers' do stand out as having consistently different ideas to the 'Doers'.
- How safe or unsafe is it to defecate in the open during menstruation? Out of the 'doers', 18% consider it very unsafe; versus only 2% of 'non-doers'.
- 46% of the 'non-doers' stated snake bite and animal attack were risks compared to 26% of the 'doers'. Similarly for sexual harassment: 35% of the 'non-doers' compared to 19% of the 'doers' mentioned this.
- How likely or not do you think it is that something bad could happen if you used the toilet during menstruation? This question shows differences in beliefs between the two, see Chart 2. Clearly more of the 'non-doers' find it 'quite likely' that something bad would happen.

### CHART 2

How likely or not likely do you think it is that something bad could happen if you used the toilet during menstruation?

Total 162 'Non-Doers' and 593 'Doers'



## ATTITUDES

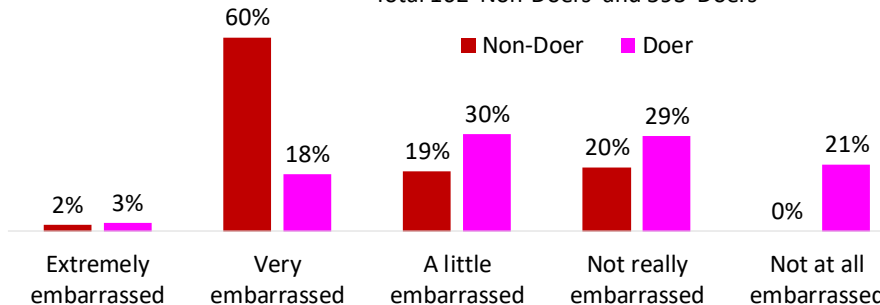
Attitudes were about beliefs related to advantages/disadvantages or cost/benefit of the behaviour, and about emotions and feelings .

- With regards to how comfortable or uncomfortable it is to use a toilet during menstruation, the replies are fairly similar in between the two groups: 79% of the 'doers' and 73% of the 'non-doers' find it comfortable. This is not an issue.
- With regards to how embarrassing it is if someone sees you going to the toilet during menstruation, there was a difference: 60% of the 'non-doers' stated that they would feel 'very embarrassed'. Only 'doers' are not embarrassed at all.

### CHART 3

How much would you feel embarrassed or not embarrassed if someone sees you going for toilet during menstruation?

Total 162 'Non-Doers' and 593 'Doers'



## WOMEN MISS OUT ON SCHOOL:

- One third (32%) of the respondents did not go to school.
- In Gaidahawa, 82% of all 152 respondents did not go to school.
- One out of five women of the total sample cannot read (20%).
- Locality-wise differences are crucial: 73% of those who cannot read are from Gaidahawa (Tarai).
- While 97% in Phedikhola, 96% in Kathekhola and 84% in Bihadi can read, only 26% of Gaidahawa respondents can.
- Out of these non-school goers, 39% were also illiterate.
- While 53% of the total sample were from the youngest age group (18 to 29), this age group accounts for 41% of those who did not go to school.
- Ethnicity makes a difference: 90% of the respondents in the religious minority group did not go to the school, 74% of the disadvantaged Tarai groups, one third of Adidas/Janajati (31%) and Dalit (36%), and 10% of the others.
- One out of four in the total sample (24%) were in the highest educational group, >10 (S.L.C.) Out of all 181 respondents in this group, 83% were from Phedikhola.

## USE OF MEDIA?

Out of 755 respondents,

- 🔥 57% listen to radio
- 🔥 85% use mobile phone
- 🔥 44% reads anything, eg. newspapers, leaflets, brochures etc.
- 🔥 56% use Social Media

The ethnic/caste/social group –wise differences are again very strong: while almost all Adibasi/Janajati and Others(96% both) use mobile phones, only about half of the Tarai women use mobile phones (43% religious minority and 53% of disadvantaged Tarai groups)

Similarly, 91% of Adibasi/Janajati, 96% of Others and 70% of Dalit do listen to FM radio, only 5% of Tarai disadvantaged groups and 7% of religious minorities do.

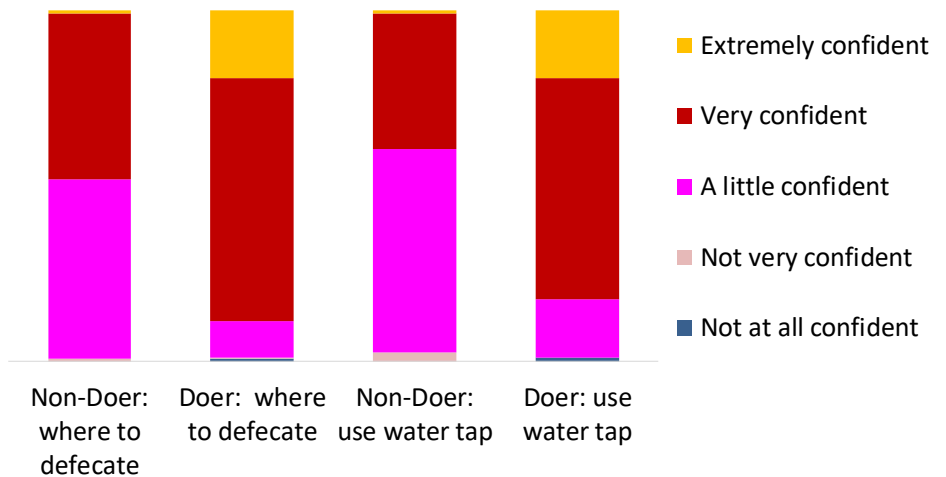
Location matters even more: in Phedikhola (in the hills) 99% listen to the radio, 98% have a mobile phone, 88% read newspapers and 72% use social media. Corresponding figures for Gaidahawa (in the Tarai) are at the lower end - 3%, 49%, 9%, and 37% respectively.

## ABILITY

Ability questions related to confidence in performance and confidence in continuation. The following Chart 3 points out how the 'doers' stand out as more confident in choosing themselves to use the toilet and to touch the water tap.

### CHART 4

Confidence in performance statements by total 162 'Non-Doers' and 593 'Doers'



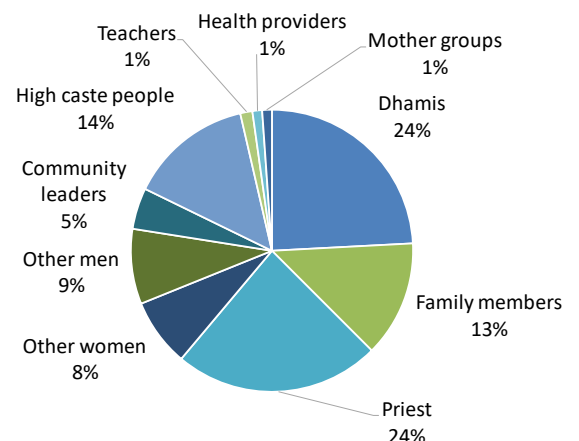
## NORMS

Norm factors in RANAS approach relate to the social influence, including other people's behaviours and other people's approval or disapproval, as well as about personal importance.

- 🔥 How important or not important it is to you personally to always use a toilet whether or not menstruating? Interestingly most of the 'doers' are in the categories 'not at all important' (48%) or 'not really important' (36%). The non-doers are more on neutral ground with 41% stating neither/nor important or not really important (43%).
- 🔥 Who is against women using the toilet during menstruation? In ODF declared municipalities, everyone should understand the importance of using the toilet all the time. However the questionnaire showed that norms regarding disapproval of women using the toilet during runs across all ethnic/social/caste/religious groups. In particular, priests, *dhamis* high caste people and other family members are the most critical (Chart 5).

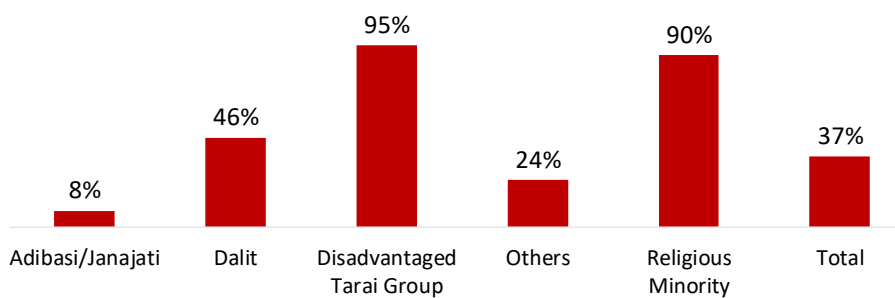
### CHART 5

Who is against women using toilet during the menstruation? Total 656 responded 'nobody' Total for the following is 99 where 94% stated more than one



## CHART 6

% of 'Yes' replies within the ethnic/social/caste group totals  
"Do you face any of the following situations during your menstrual period: live in different house, different room of same house, animal shed, eat different food, bath in separate place, absent



## THE WAY FORWARD?

Behaviour Change Technique (BCT) stems from 'RANAS', considering what stands out:

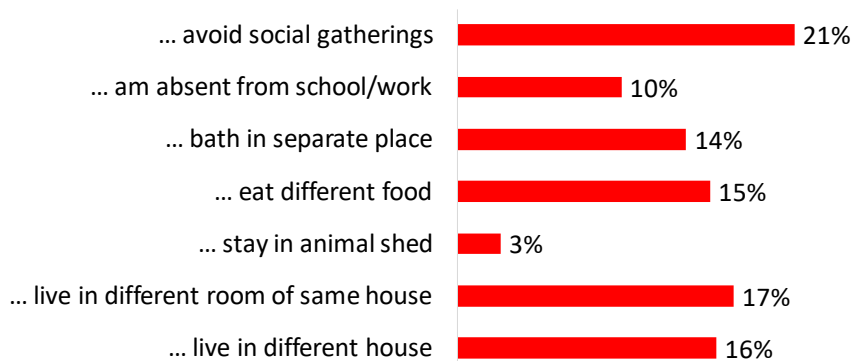
- 🔥 **Knowledge:** both the 'doers' and the 'non-doers' would benefit from more knowledge.
- 🔥 **Attitudes:** Describe feelings about performing and about consequences of the behaviour: present using toilet at all times as pleasant, convenient & joyful, something not embarrassing.
- 🔥 **Norms:** Inform about others' approval: point out that other important people support the use of toilets at all times. Try to get especially *Dhamis* and priests /religious leaders to communicate the importance of using the toilet by all persons at all times, including during menstruation.
- 🔥 **Ability:** Several BCTs are available for building the confidence.
- 🔥 **Self-regulation:** Prompt coping with barriers: ask participants to identify barriers to toilet & tap use, and plan solutions to those barriers. Prompt women to resist social pressure: ask to anticipate & prepare for negative comments from others or for pressure to perform the undesirable behaviour.

## SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation questions relate to barrier planning. As is evident from the Charts 6 and 7, there are many barriers to be faced, and these are clearly related to the ethnic/caste/social/religious context. In Chart 7 below, women self-regulate their behaviours in relation to the barriers they anticipate. In this regard we believe that we cannot simply look at the differences in between all 'doers' and 'non-doers', but these *within the specific group*.

## CHART 7

% of 'Yes' replies out of total sample of 755  
"When menstruating, I ...."



## WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE FROM HERE?

- 🔥 Virtually all women, from all ethnic/social/caste/religious groups, are facing some level of menstruation-related discrimination. This is contrary to the commonly held belief that ethnic minorities, for instance, are not influenced by these taboos.
- 🔥 The educational level is very poor. Only one location was standing out with more women reaching SLC and also using various types of media, while the Tarai stands out with women seriously missing out on schooling. This information is critical for Behaviour Change Communications: we cannot base our communication on written materials, even the posters need to have clear visual messages that do not build on any written message.
- 🔥 Both locality and ethnic/social/caste/religious groups matters. While we can attempt to choose the best Behaviour Change Technique based on the comparison in between the 'doers' and the 'non-doers', the other factors count.
- 🔥 For instance, depending on the locality and target group, radio, text messages and social media may be very successful—or virtually useless in transmitting the message to women.

See the side bar for action items.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Name of enumerator	Total
Binista Kumari Dhami	177
Bishnu Maya Shiwakoti	174
Jansari Sharki	152
Nirmala Dhami	82
Monika Ghimire	75
Manasa Raj Giri	52
Deva Laxmi Thami	43
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>755</b>



**Photo:** Water supply scheme inauguration at Harinas, Syangja. Water , sanitation & hygiene make a change in women's life. Here menstruation did probably not limit women from contributing to their water supply scheme, see results for the nearby Phedikhola in this brief.

## REFERENCES & BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

**RWSSP-WN Briefs 2-2018, 5-2018, 6-2018, 7-2018 and 8-2018** available at [www.rwsspwn.org.np/briefs2018](http://www.rwsspwn.org.np/briefs2018)

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## RESULTS INDICATORS FOR RWSSP-WN II

*This Brief relates to the RWSSP-WN II Overall objective: Improved health and fulfilment of the equal right to water and sanitation for the inhabitants of the Project area.*

Particularly to the following result areas:

Result 1: Access to sanitation and hygiene for **all** achieved and sustained in the project working municipalities.

Result 2: Access to safe, functional and inclusive water supply services for **all** achieved and sustained in the project working Municipalities



**FCG**

The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project in Western Nepal Phase II is a bilateral development cooperation project funded by the governments of Nepal and Finland, and implemented through local governments and users' groups under the Department of Local Infrastructure Development and Agricultural Roads (DoLIDAR), Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. RWSSP-WN II works in 14 districts and 99 local governance units in Western and Mid-Western development regions in provinces 5 and 6 in Nepal .

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